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C O N F I D E N T I A L DHAKA 006264

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [BG](#)

SUBJECT: HOME MINISTER PROVIDES BACKGROUND ON CHOUDHURY CASE

REF: A. DHAKA 06225

[1B](#). DHAKA 06257

[1C](#). DHAKA 06261

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires a.i. Geeta Pasi; reason 1.4(d)

[11](#). (C) SUMMARY. Charge d'Affaires a.i. met with Home Minister Lutfozzaman Babar on October 12 to discuss journalist Salah Uddin Shoaib Choudhury. Charge informed Babar that the Embassy remains very engaged in the Choudhury case. She reminded the Home Minister of U.S. focus in the case, namely to ensure that Choudhury receives due process and that his safety is guaranteed. Babar confirmed GOB concurrence on both points and detailed his personal efforts on behalf of Choudhury as well as the attention the case has received within the government, including from the Prime Minister. POLOFF served as notetaker. END SUMMARY.

[12](#). (C) Babar said the U.S. has been misled by Choudhury, adding that he has been dishonest. Asking that we "not make it public," he told us he had been providing Choudhury with monthly stipends since the latter's release from prison in [12004](#). According to Babar, on October 4 - the day before the most recent incident (REFTEL Dhaka 06225) - Choudhury had called him asking for an emergency advance. Babar confided that he sent him 20,000 taka (300 USD). The next day Choudhury called Babar's personal aide to inform him of the incident. Babar said he immediately ordered police to Choudhury's office to investigate.

[13](#). (C) Babar dismissed the October 5 attack as a property dispute completely unrelated to the sedition case. Hilaluddin Khan owned the property where Choudhury had set up an office. Khan's brother Mahbulul Alam Khan, who was a business partner of Choudhury's on the property issue, now claims that Choudhury falsified documents to claim ownership of the property. The Home Minister provided copies of legal documents related to this case. Babar added that Choudhury is also refusing to pay rent on his residence, noting that it is frustrating to help Choudhury when he unnecessarily antagonizes people at every turn. Describing Choudhury, the Minister said, "he is always creating a mess, I don't understand it." The two recent property incidents served to convince him that Choudhury was "a bad man." Babar said he would not help Choudhury out in the property cases.

[14](#). (C) The Home Minister said, however, he has been working to get Choudhury's sedition case dropped. When he asked the PM for permission to do so, she told him, "do whatever you have to." Babar arranged with the Law Minister to get the case dropped. "All Choudhury had to do was file a review petition (similar to an appeal)," but he dragged his heels. Babar said that he would continue to try to help Choudhury in the sedition case. He asked rhetorically, "What is he going

to do when I am out of office at the end of the month?"

15. (C) Babar detailed another of his efforts to help Choudhury financially. It involved paying him a large sum to place positive articles about Bangladesh in US newspapers and required Babar to approach enlist BNP officials to contribute money. Choudhury said he would have a "well-known journalist who wrote for the Washington Post, the New York Post, etc." place the articles. The articles never appeared, and when the Bangladesh Embassy in Washington tried to verify the bonafides of the journalist, they could find no evidence she existed. Babar confessed he is paying a political price for endorsing Choudhury.

16. (C) COMMENT: Babar confirmed and detailed the long history between himself and Choudhury, and while visibly frustrated, he once again said he would keep Choudhury safe and ensure his trial is carried out properly (noting repeatedly that he wants to have the sedition case dismissed). The Home Minister shared many details about the Choudhury case for the first time, including his personal interaction with Choudhury. While very upset with Choudhury, the Home Minister reiterated his commitment - and that of his government - to ensure due process and security for Choudhury. END COMMENT.  
PASI